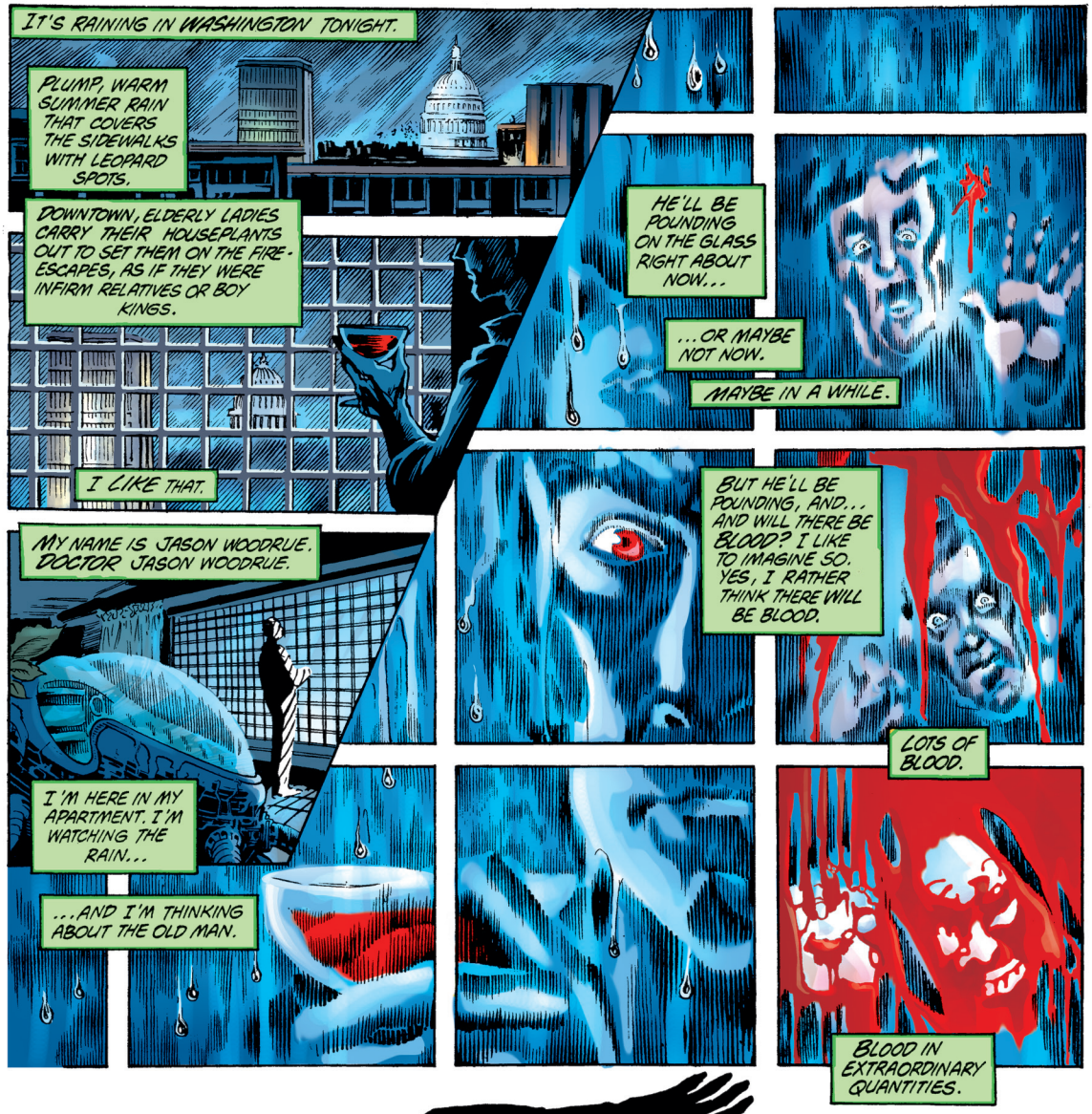
DC
The SAGA of the
SWAMP THING
75¢
21
FEB. 84
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
T. YEATES
C-601



THE ANATOMY LESSON

ALAN MOORE: SCRIPT

STEVE OLIFF, COLORIST

JOHN COSTANZA: LETTERING

STEPHEN BISSETTE & JOHN TOTLEBEN: ARTISTS

LEN WEIN: EDITOR

I REMEMBER THE OLD MAN SHOWING ME AROUND HIS BUILDING.
HE WAS SO PROUD OF IT. LIKE A CHILD WITH THE BIGGEST DOLLHOUSE IN THE WORLD.
OF COURSE, THIS WAS AFTER HIS CORPORATION HAD SECURED MY RELEASE FROM JAIL.
WELL?
IT'S VERY... EMPTY.
I'D EXPECTED A HIGHER SECURITY PROFILE.
IT'S ALL ELECTRONIC, DR. WOODRUE. SILICONE SENTRIES WITH DIGITAL DOGS...
...AND I CONTROL EVERYTHING FROM A CONSOLE NO BIGGER THAN A CHECKERBOARD. SPARES ME A LOT OF GRIEF WITH LABOR RELATIONS.
FSSSSS
I.D. CONFIRMED
THROUGH HERE...
HE'S IN HERE? HOW LONG HAS HE...?
ABOUT TWO WEEKS. HE'S BEEN HERE SINCE WE SHOT HIM.
WELL, DR. WOODRUE, DON'T BE AFRAID.
OPEN IT UP.

THERE...
...GRAY, BRITTLE, TATTOOED BY FROST, QUITE DEAD...
THIS WAS MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE...
SWAMP THING
CREATED BY: LEN WEIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON
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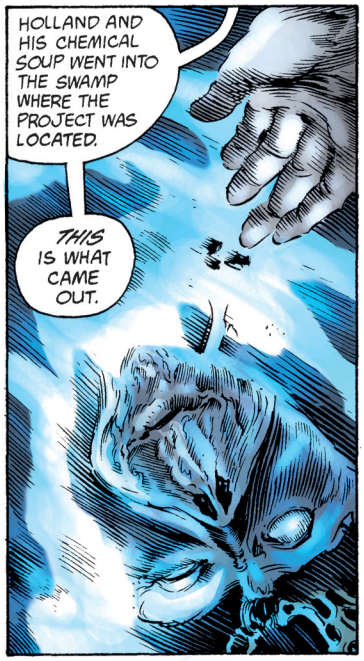

YOU MENTIONED A LINDA HOLLAND...

HIS WIFE AND CO-WORKER. YOU KNOW THESE PEOPLE... LIBERAL, EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS. CARING AND SHARING.

HIS WIFE WAS SHOT AND KILLED SHORTLY AFTER HOLLAND VANISHED IN THE EXPLOSION. SHE'S THE REASON YOU'RE HERE, WOODRUE.

"YOU SEE, WE GOT INTERESTED IN THIS FORMULA THAT HOLLAND HAD BEEN WORKING ON. WE HAD HER EXHUMED.

"IT MADE SENSE. AFTER ALL, APART FROM HER HUSBAND, SHE WAS THE ONLY HUMAN WHO'D BEEN EXPOSED TO THE FORMULA. SHE'D BEEN WORKING WITH THE STUFF FOR MONTHS...

"WE FIGURED IT MAY HAVE PERMEATED HER CELLULAR STRUCTURE, JUST THROUGH THE REPEATED SKIN CONTACT.

"SO WE DUG HER UP, AND WE HAD SOME PEOPLE POKE AROUND A LITTLE...

"KNOW WHAT WE FOUND?"

NOTHING.

OH, THE FORMULA HAD COLLECTED IN HER BODY. IT JUST HADN'T DONE ANYTHING.
NO REASON WHY IT SHOULD, OF COURSE. THE FORMULA WASN'T DESIGNED TO AFFECT HUMAN TISSUE.
JUST PLANTS...
...EXCEPT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN OUR FRIEND IN THE CRYOCHEST, DOES IT?
WE'D ASSUMED THAT THE FORMULA HAD SOMEHOW TURNED HOLLAND INTO A PLANT. IF IT DOESN'T AFFECT HUMAN TISSUE, THAT IS PATENTLY IMPOSSIBLE.
YOU BEGIN TO SEE WHY WE ARRANGED YOUR RELEASE FROM JAIL, DR. WOODRUE?
SPEAKING OF WHICH...
SHLUNK
...I BELIEVE IT'S TIME THAT I SAW YOUR CREDENTIALS.
THAT ISN'T YOUR SKIN IS IT? MY FILES SAY IT'S ARTIFICIAL. YOU CAN DISSOLVE IT.
YOUR FILES ARE VERY ACCURATE, GENERAL.
THERE.
SATISFIED?
PERFECTLY. YOU'RE WOODRUE.
YOU'RE THE FLORONIC MAN.
WHEN CAN YOU START?
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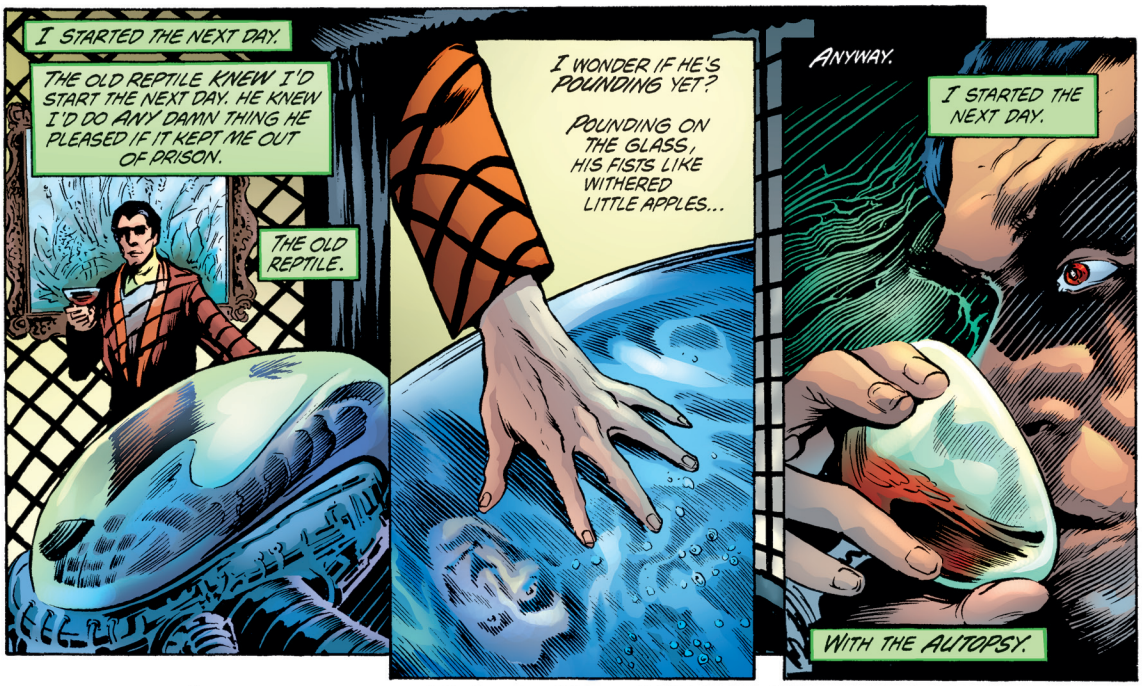
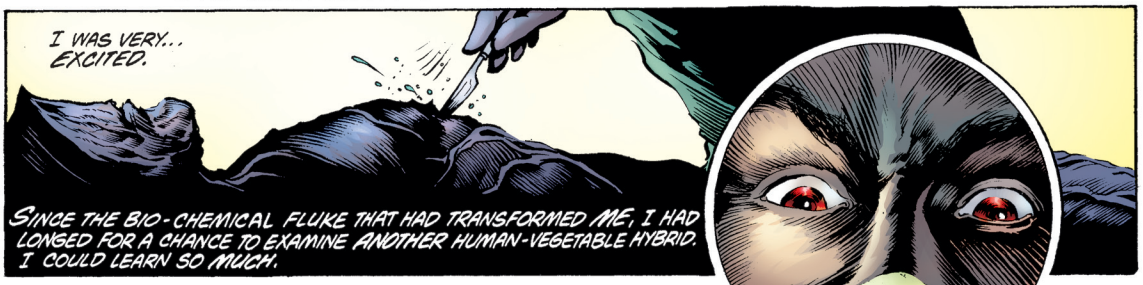
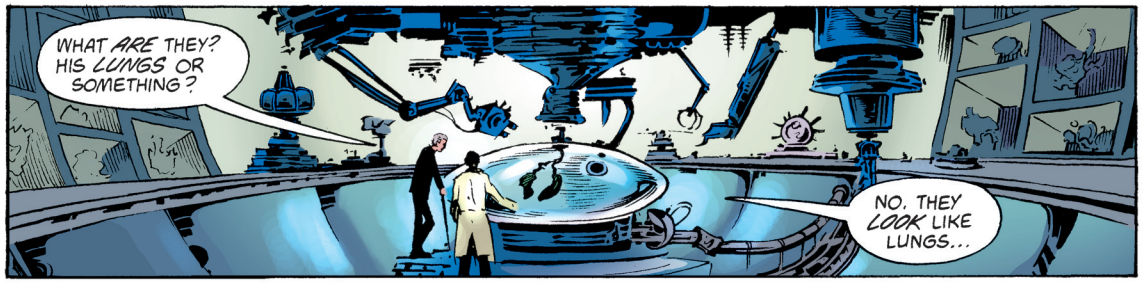


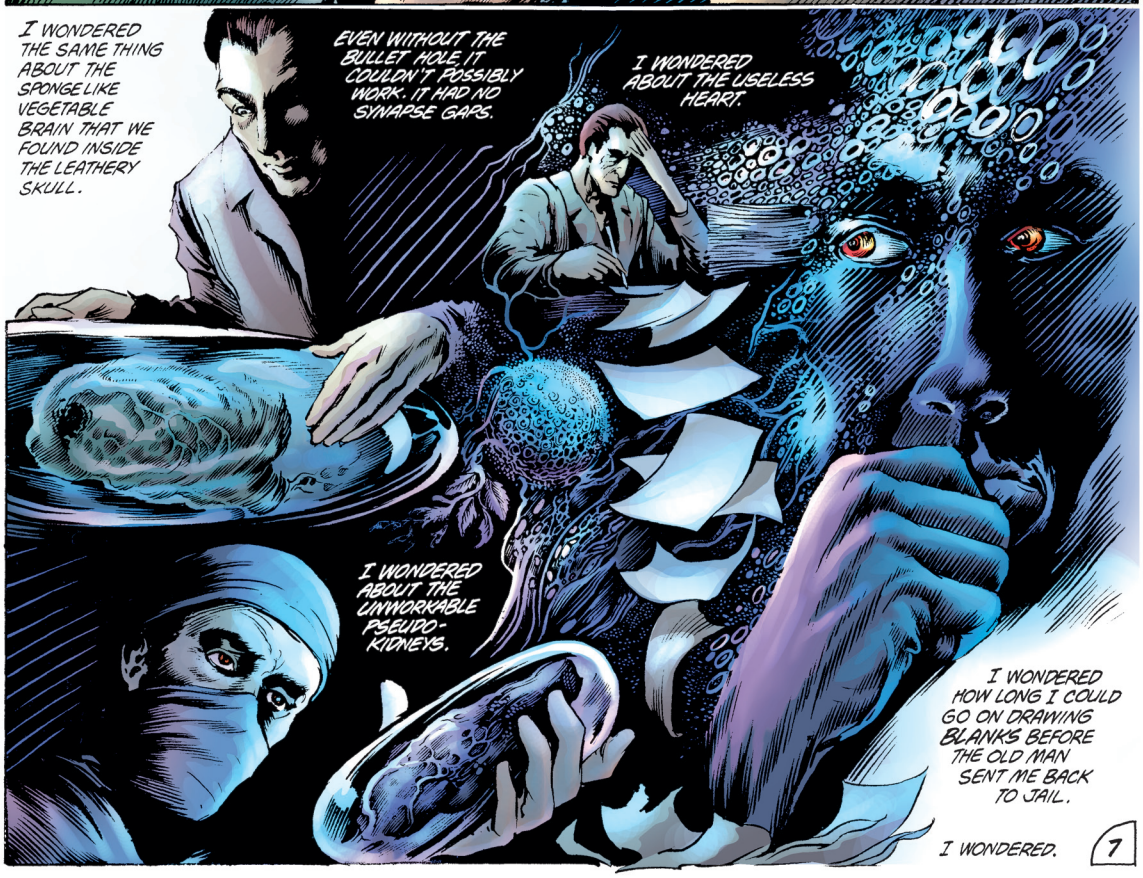
I REMEMBER CLEARLY THE MOMENT BEFORE I BEGAN TO CUT:



I OPENED HIM UP. HE HAD THINGS INSIDE HIM.

THERE WERE TWO LARGE, POD-LIKE STRUCTURES WITHIN THE CHEST CAVITY...





THOSE WERE LONG WEEKS. LONG AND FRUITLESS.

I SAW A LOT MORE OF THE OLD MAN, MY DISTASTE RIPENING TOWARD LOATHING WITH EACH ENCOUNTER.

IN THE EVENINGS, WHEN THE MINIMAL STAFF HAD GONE HOME, HE WOULD STROLL PROUDLY AROUND THAT HUGE AND EMPTY TOMB OF A BUILDING.

SOMETIMES HE'D INSIST THAT I ACCOMPANY HIM.

HE'D TALK ABOUT THE ELECTRONIC SECURITY, ABOUT HOW ALL THE DOORS WERE CONTROLLED FROM HIS OFFICE...

SOMETIMES HE'D TALK TO ME ABOUT MY CAREER PROSPECTS.

THE WORD "FREAK" WAS USED AT LEAST ONCE.

JAIL WAS MENTIONED.

AND I STOOD THERE.

AND I TOOK IT.

AND EVERY NIGHT I CAME BACK TO THESE SPECIAL APARTMENTS THAT HE'D RENTED FOR ME.

AND EVERY MORNING I SET TO WORK HAULING ORGANS THAT COULDN'T WORK OUT OF A BODY THAT HAD NEVER NEEDED THEM.

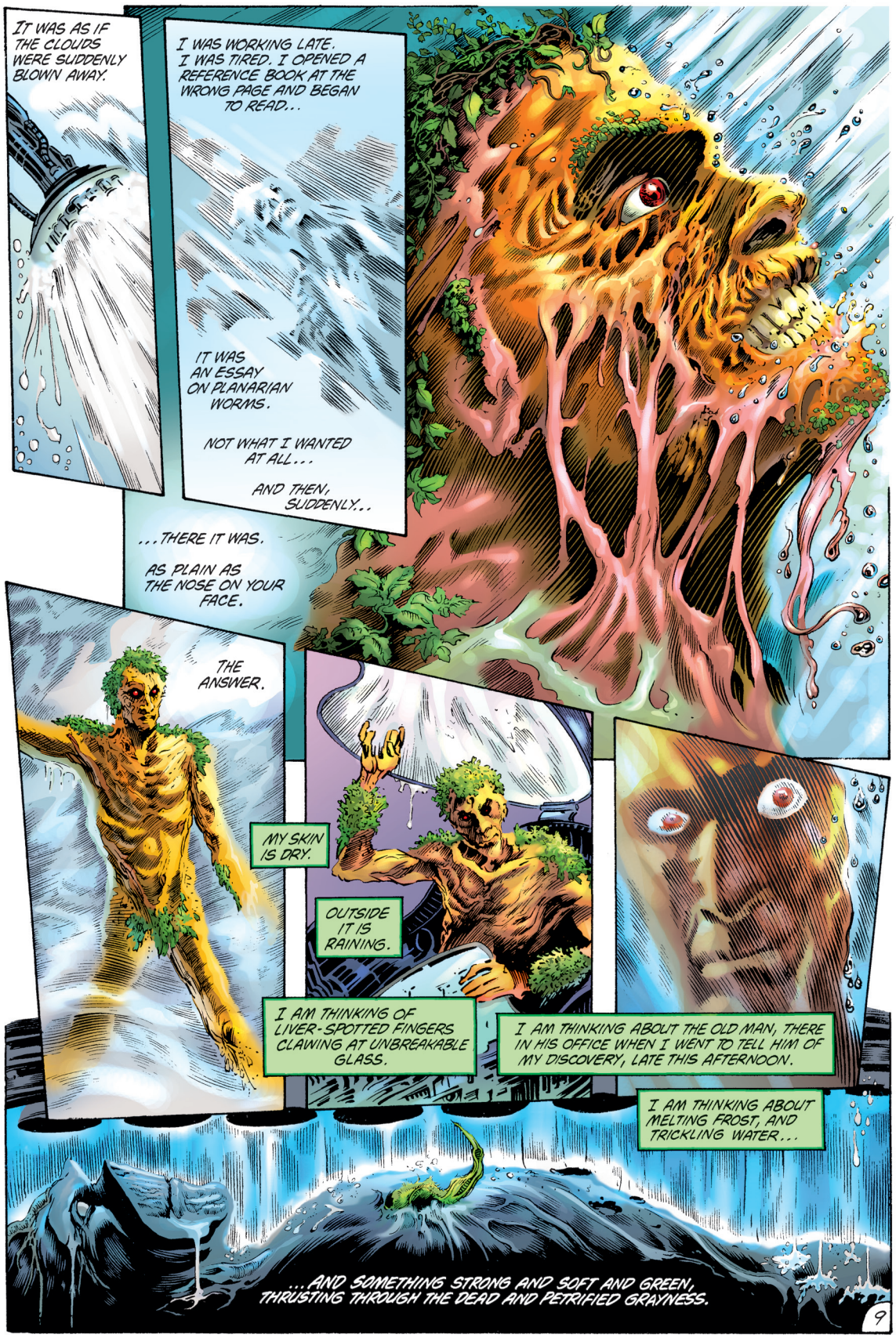
THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA HAD TURNED HOLLAND INTO A PLANT... EXCEPT THAT IT COULDN'T HAVE. IT DIDN'T WORK ON HUMAN TISSUE.

THE SWAMP THING HAD ORGANS LIKE THOSE OF ANY LIVING CREATURE...

...EXCEPT THAT THEY DID NOT, COULD NOT, AND HAD NOT BEEN DESIGNED TO FUNCTION.

IT WAS MORE THAN A HUMAN MIND COULD EVER BE EXPECTED TO UNRAVEL.

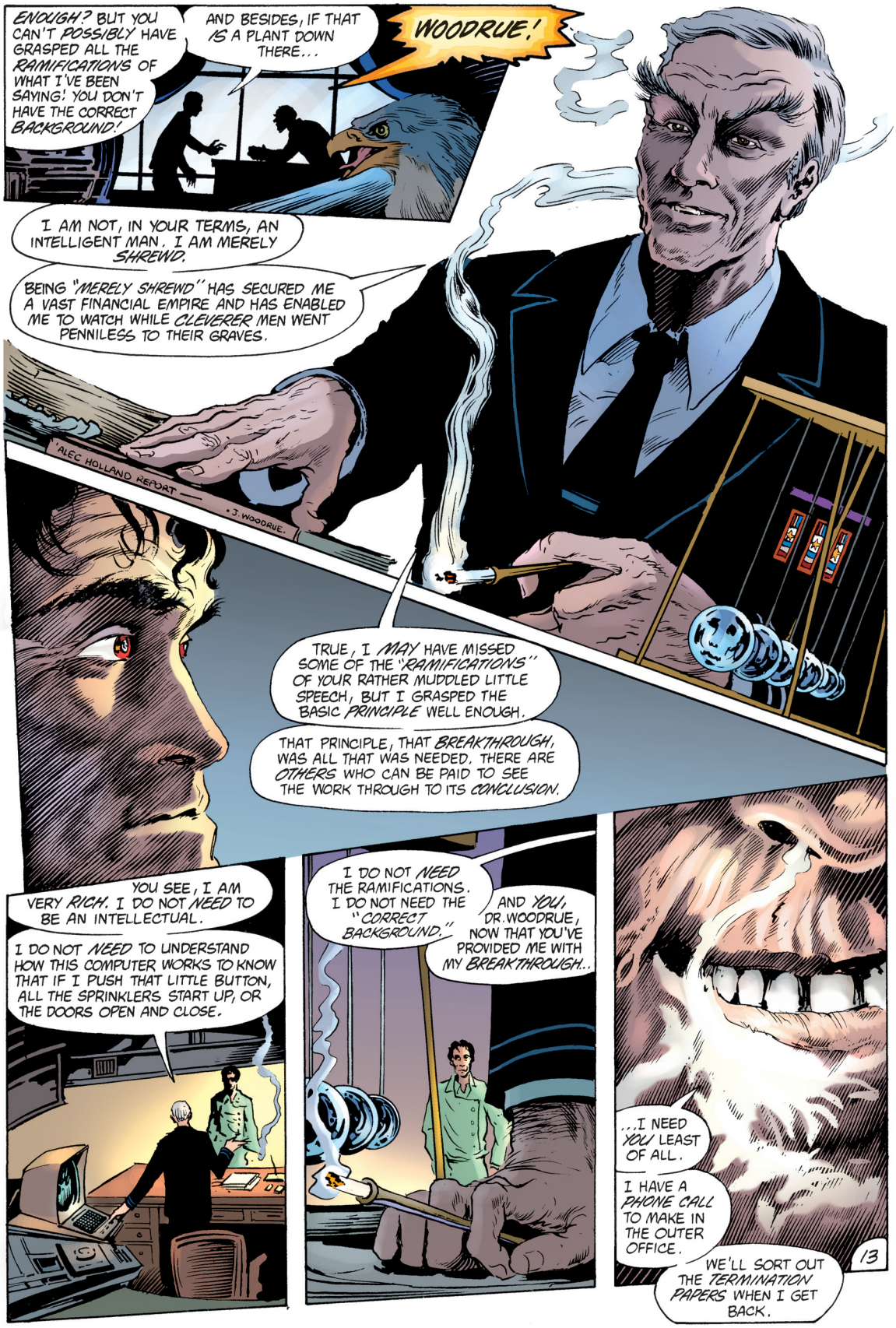
I HAD THE ANSWER WITHIN SIX WEEKS.


IT WAS AS IF THE CLOUDS WERE SUDDENLY BLOWN AWAY.
I WAS WORKING LATE. I WAS TIRED. I OPENED A REFERENCE BOOK AT THE WRONG PAGE AND BEGAN TO READ...
IT WAS AN ESSAY ON PLANARIAN WORMS.
NOT WHAT I WANTED AT ALL...
AND THEN, SUDDENLY...
...THERE IT WAS.
AS PLAIN AS THE NOSE ON YOUR FACE.
THE ANSWER.
MY SKIN IS DRY.
OUTSIDE IT IS RAINING.
I AM THINKING OF LIVER-SPOTTED FINGERS CLAWING AT UNBREAKABLE GLASS.
I AM THINKING ABOUT THE OLD MAN, THERE IN HIS OFFICE WHEN I WENT TO TELL HIM OF MY DISCOVERY, LATE THIS AFTERNOON.
I AM THINKING ABOUT MELTING FROST, AND TRICKLING WATER...
...AND SOMETHING STRONG AND SOFT AND GREEN, THRUSTING THROUGH THE DEAD AND PETRIFIED GRAYNESS.

THE OLD MAN HAS NO ONE BUT HIMSELF TO BLAME.
HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND, EVEN WHEN I EXPLAINED IT TO HIM. HE DIDN'T LISTEN...

"IMAGINE HIM, REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS THERE IN HIS CABIN THAT NIGHT...
TIC TIC TIC TIC TIC
"THERE'S SOMETHING TAPED TO THE UNDERSIDE OF HIS WORKBENCH. WITH MOUNTING APPREHENSION HE SCRABBLES TOWARD IT...
"IT'S DYNAMITE.
"FIVE STICKS OF IT.
"AND HE'S MAYBE EIGHTEEN INCHES AWAY FROM IT WHEN IT EXPLODES.
TIC TIC
CLICK!
"THE COMBINED EFFECTS OF THE BLAST AND THE REFLEX MUSCLES IN HIS LEGS PROPEL HIM THROUGH THE DOOR AND INTO THE SWAMP...
"ALEC HOLLAND IS ALREADY DEAD.
"HIS BODY GOES INTO THE SWAMP ALONG WITH THE FORMULA THAT IT IS SATURATED WITH.
"AND, ONCE THERE...
"...IT DECOMPOSES...
"A PATCH OF SWAMPLAND LIKE THAT WOULD BE TEEMING WITH MICRO-ORGANISMS. IT WOULDN'T TAKE LONG, GENERAL.
"BUT WHAT ABOUT THE PLANTS IN THE SWAMP? THE PLANTS THAT HAVE BEEN ALTERED BY THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA?
"THE PLANTS WHOSE HUNGRY ROOT SYSTEMS ARE BUSILY INGESTING THE MORTAL REMAINS OF ALEC HOLLAND?
"THOSE PLANTS EAT HIM. THEY EAT HIM AS IF HE WERE A PLANARIAN WORM, OR A CANNIBAL WISE MAN, OR A GENIUS ON RYE!
"THEY EAT HIM...
"...AND THEY BECOME INFECTED BY A POWERFUL CONSCIOUSNESS THAT DOES NOT REALIZE IT IS NO LONGER ALIVE!"

"IMAGINE THAT CLOUDY, CONFUSED INTELLIGENCE, POSSIBLY WITH ONLY THE VAGUEST NOTION OF SELF, TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF ITS NEW ENVIRONMENT...
"...GRADUALLY SHAPING THE PLANT CELLS THAT IT NOW INHABITS INTO A SHAPE THAT IT'S MORE COMFORTABLE WITH.
"IT REMEMBERS HAVING BONES, AND SO IT BUILDS ITSELF A SKELETON OF WOOD. IT REMEMBERS HAVING MUSCLE AND CONSTRUCTS MUSCLES FROM SUPPLE PLANT FIBER...
"IT REMEMBERS HAVING LUNGS, AND A HEART, AND A BRAIN... AND IT DOES ITS BEST TO DUPLICATE THEM.
"YOU SEE, WE WERE WRONG, GENERAL.
"WE THOUGHT THAT THE SWAMP THING WAS ALEC HOLLAND, SOMEHOW TRANSFORMED INTO A PLANT. IT WASN'T.
"IT WAS A PLANT THAT THOUGHT IT WAS ALEC HOLLAND!
"A PLANT THAT WAS TRYING ITS LEVEL BEST TO BE ALEC HOLLAND..."
...AND THAT PATHETIC, MISSHAPEN PARODY DOWNSTAIRS IN THE CRYO-CHEST WAS THE CLOSEST THAT IT COULD GET.
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT.
YOU SEE, IF THAT'S A PLANT THAT WE HAVE DOWN THERE...
DR. WOODRUE...
...I THINK I'VE HEARD ENOUGH.


ENOUGH? BUT YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY HAVE GRASPED ALL THE RAMIFICATIONS OF WHAT I'VE BEEN SAYING! YOU DON'T HAVE THE CORRECT BACKGROUND!
AND BESIDES, IF THAT IS A PLANT DOWN THERE...
WOODRUE!
I AM NOT, IN YOUR TERMS, AN INTELLIGENT MAN. I AM MERELY SHREWD.
BEING "MERELY SHREWD" HAS SECURED ME A VAST FINANCIAL EMPIRE AND HAS ENABLED ME TO WATCH WHILE CLEVERER MEN WENT PENNILESS TO THEIR GRAVES.
ALEC HOLLAND REPORT
J. WOODRUE.
TRUE, I MAY HAVE MISSED SOME OF THE "RAMIFICATIONS" OF YOUR RATHER MUDDLED LITTLE SPEECH, BUT I GRASPED THE BASIC PRINCIPLE WELL ENOUGH.
THAT PRINCIPLE, THAT BREAKTHROUGH, WAS ALL THAT WAS NEEDED. THERE ARE OTHERS WHO CAN BE PAID TO SEE THE WORK THROUGH TO ITS CONCLUSION.
YOU SEE, I AM VERY RICH. I DO NOT NEED TO BE AN INTELLECTUAL.
I DO NOT NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW THIS COMPUTER WORKS TO KNOW THAT IF I PUSH THAT LITTLE BUTTON, ALL THE SPRINKLERS START UP, OR THE DOORS OPEN AND CLOSE.
I DO NOT NEED THE RAMIFICATIONS. I DO NOT NEED THE "CORRECT BACKGROUND."
AND YOU, DR. WOODRUE, NOW THAT YOU'VE PROVIDED ME WITH MY BREAKTHROUGH..
...I NEED YOU LEAST OF ALL.
I HAVE A PHONE CALL TO MAKE IN THE OUTER OFFICE.
WE'LL SORT OUT THE TERMINATION PAPERS WHEN I GET BACK.
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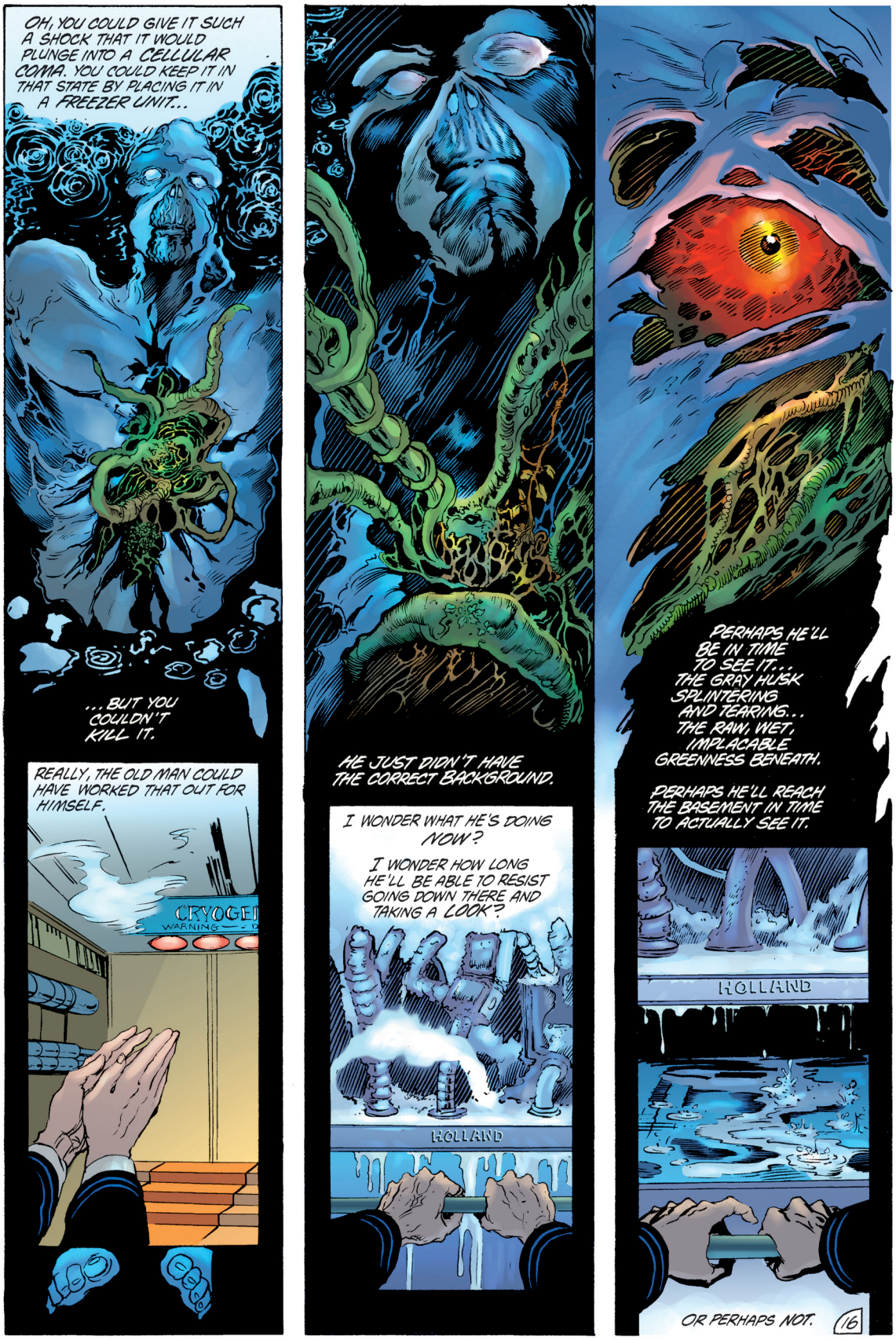
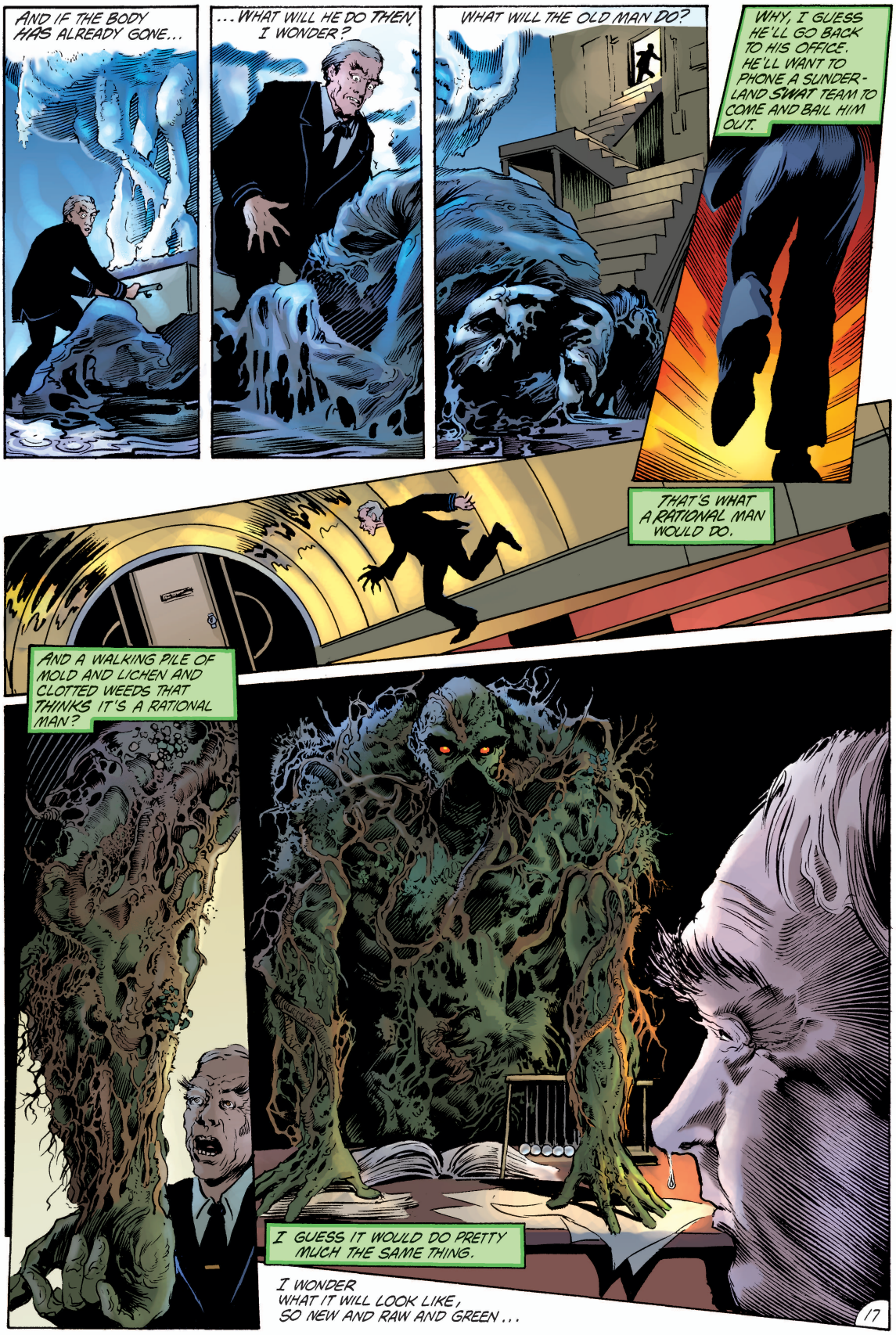
...AND THAT'S HOW THE OLD MAN FIRED ME.
JUST LIKE THAT.
...AND THEN HE SAUNTERED OUT OF HIS OFFICE: A SELF-MADE MAN... A COMMON MAN, BY GOD... WHO'D JUST PUT ONE OVER ON AN UPPITY INTELLECTUAL.
CODE
PRINT
HE WAS CHUCKLING TO HIMSELF.
SO WAS I.
HE'D LEFT ME ALONE WITH HIS COMPUTER...
...AND I UNDERSTOOD EXACTLY HOW IT WORKED.
SUNDERLAND HADN'T BEEN BRAGGING.
FROM THAT CONSOLE YOU CONTROLLED THE WHOLE BUILDING.
YOU CONTROLLED THE ELEVATORS, THE LIGHTS, THE SWITCHBOARD...
...AND THE THERMOSTATS IN THE FREEZER UNITS...
...AND
THE DOORS.

I AM SITTING IN MY APARTMENT OUTSIDE, IT IS RAINING.
I AM LAUGHING. LAUGHING VERY LOUDLY.
FRIENDS HAVE TOLD ME IT IS NOT A SOUND CONDUCIVE TO TRANQUILLITY.
I AM THINKING ABOUT THE OLD MAN.
HE'LL STAY LATE, WHEN EVERYONE HAS GONE. PERHAPS HE'LL READ THROUGH THE NOTES HE WOULDN'T PERMIT ME TO KEEP...
...SKIPPING THE BIG WORDS...
ALEC HOLLAND REPORT 2034
GUMBASIA
PHOTOSYNTHESIS STRUCTURES
VISION
...AND THEN MAYBE HE'LL WANT TO TAKE A STROLL, LIKE EVERY OTHER NIGHT. A STROLL AROUND THE BIGGEST DOLLHOUSE IN THE WORLD.
HE'LL PUNCH ONE OF HIS LITTLE BUTTONS TO SWITCH THE DOOR MECHANISMS TO MANUAL, SO THAT HE CAN CONTROL THEM WHILE HE'S AWAY FROM HIS CHECKERBOARD.
EXIT
AND THEN HE'LL STRUT PROUDLY DOWN THE HALL AND THINK HOW LUCKY HE IS TO HAVE ALL THIS.
IDENTI CONFIR
HE SHOULD HAVE LET ME FINISH. HE SHOULD HAVE LISTENED.
THEN I'D HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL TO HIM.
I'D HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXPLAIN THAT YOU CAN'T KILL A VEGETABLE BY SHOOTING IT THROUGH THE HEAD.

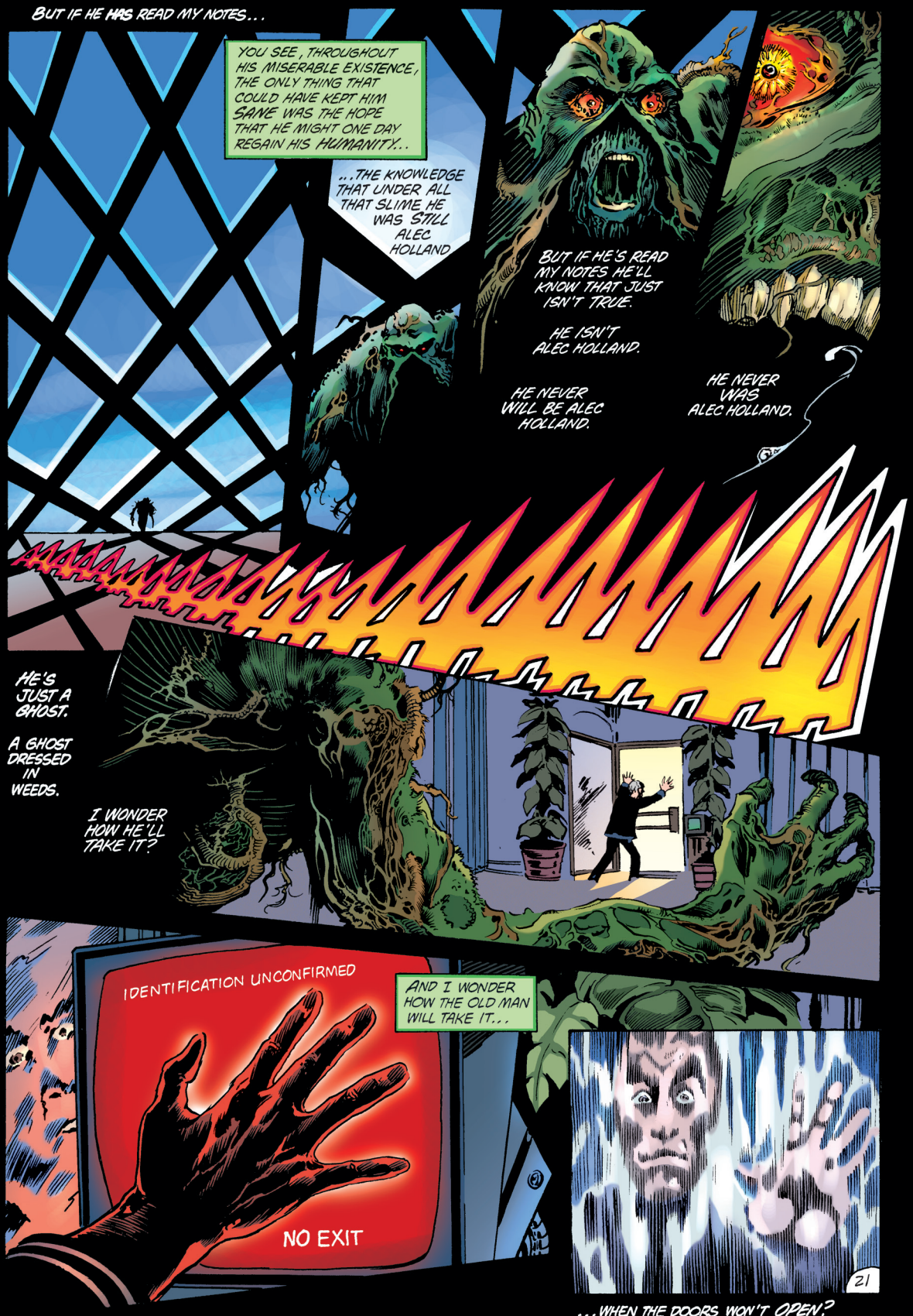

OH, YOU COULD GIVE IT SUCH A SHOCK THAT IT WOULD PLUNGE INTO A CELLULAR COMA. YOU COULD KEEP IT IN THAT STATE BY PLACING IT IN A FREEZER UNIT...
...BUT YOU COULDN'T KILL IT.
REALLY, THE OLD MAN COULD HAVE WORKED THAT OUT FOR HIMSELF.
CRYOGE
WARNING
HE JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE CORRECT BACKGROUND.
I WONDER WHAT HE'S DOING NOW?
I WONDER HOW LONG HE'LL BE ABLE TO RESIST GOING DOWN THERE AND TAKING A LOOK?
HOLLAND
PERHAPS HE'LL BE IN TIME TO SEE IT... THE GRAY HUSK SPLINTERING AND TEARING... THE RAW, WET, IMPLACABLE GREENNESS BENEATH.
PERHAPS HE'LL REACH THE BASEMENT IN TIME TO ACTUALLY SEE IT.
HOLLAND
OR PERHAPS NOT.


AND IF THE BODY HAS ALREADY GONE...
...WHAT WILL HE DO THEN, I WONDER?
WHAT WILL THE OLD MAN DO?
WHY, I GUESS HE'LL GO BACK TO HIS OFFICE. HE'LL WANT TO PHONE A SUNDERLAND SWAT TEAM TO COME AND BAIL HIM OUT.
THAT'S WHAT A RATIONAL MAN WOULD DO.
AND A WALKING PILE OF MOLD AND LICHEN AND CLOTTED WEEDS THAT THINKS IT'S A RATIONAL MAN?
I GUESS IT WOULD DO PRETTY MUCH THE SAME THING.
I WONDER WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE, SO NEW AND RAW AND GREEN...

... AND I WONDER HOW MUCH IT WILL HAVE SEEN?
YOU...UH...
ARE YOU, UH, STILL... INTELLIGENT?
CAN YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING?
UH... THE FILE ON YOU...
UH, LOOK, I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE READ THAT FILE THERE, BUT...
YES...
I... HAVE READ... THE FILE.
HOLLAND REPORT - J. WOODRUE
LIKE IT?

MMMMMMMMUURRRAAAAAGH
I AM THINKING ABOUT THE OLD MAN.
I AM THINKING ABOUT THE CRACKING OF HIS JOINTS AS HE RUNS.
PRIV
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
PRIVATE
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
19
I AM THINKING OF THE TERROR IN HIS ANCIENT, ATROPHIED HEART.

THIS IS HIS BUILDING, YOU SEE.
THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE HE WAS SAFE.
NOW THE BLIND GLASS AND THE DISPASSIONATE METAL MOCKS HIM WITH HIS OWN REFLECTION, FRIGHTENED AND SMALL AND SCURRYING...
...LIKE A BEETLE IN A BOX.
LIKE A WORM IN A MAZE.
OF COURSE, THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY REAL EVIDENCE OF THE SWAMP THING INTENTIONALLY HURTING OR KILLING ANYONE.
THE OLD MAN SHOULDN'T BE IN ANY REAL DANGER AT ALL...
...AS LONG AS THE CREATURE HASN'T READ MY NOTES.


BUT IF HE HAS READ MY NOTES...
YOU SEE, THROUGHOUT HIS MISERABLE EXISTENCE, THE ONLY THING THAT COULD HAVE KEPT HIM SANE WAS THE HOPE THAT HE MIGHT ONE DAY REGAIN HIS HUMANITY...
...THE KNOWLEDGE THAT UNDER ALL THAT SLIME HE WAS STILL ALEC HOLLAND
BUT IF HE'S READ MY NOTES HE'LL KNOW THAT JUST ISN'T TRUE.
HE ISN'T ALEC HOLLAND.
HE NEVER WILL BE ALEC HOLLAND.
HE NEVER WAS ALEC HOLLAND.
HE'S JUST A GHOST.
A GHOST DRESSED IN WEEDS.
I WONDER HOW HE'LL TAKE IT?
IDENTIFICATION UNCONFIRMED
NO EXIT
AND I WONDER HOW THE OLD MAN WILL TAKE IT...
...WHEN THE DOORS WON'T OPEN?

THE DYING'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

AND WHAT THEN?
WHERE WOULD THE CREATURE GO THEN?
I HAVE TO KNOW. I HAVE TO FOLLOW HIM. THERE'S SO MUCH TO LEARN, SO MUCH TO KNOW...
WHERE WOULD I GO IF I WERE THE SWAMP THING?
I'D GO BACK TO LOUISIANA. BACK TO THE MUD AND THE STEAM AND THE FLIES...
BACK TO THE BAYOU.
BACK HOME...
IT'S DARK.
IT'S LATE.
I HAVE A LOT TO DO TOMORROW.
NO MATTER.
FOR THE MOMENT I AM CONTENT SIMPLY TO THINK, AND TO PLAN...
...AND TO LISTEN.
IT'S RAINING IN WASHINGTON TONIGHT.
23
NEXT: SWAMPED!